

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Project Telephone (FTTH) Upgrade- Easement Deed #8121 Amendment
Proposed Implementation Date:	Spring 2023
Proponent:	Project Telephone
Location:	ALL of Section 16, Township 6 South, Range 18 East (Common Schools Trust)
County:	Carbon County

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The Proponent, Project Telephone, is applying to amend their existing 20' wide easement Deed #8121 on a parcel of State Trust Land in Carbon County for the installation of fiber optic telecommunication lines as described as ALL of Section 16, Township 6 South, Range 18 East. The route will not change from the original granted easement. The amendment will allow the proponent to add an additional line within their granted corridor in order to install a high-speed fiber optic telecommunication line.

The easement amendment is part of a larger project where Project Telephone is upgrading approximately 113 miles of their telecommunications lines in rural Stillwater and Carbon County. The project consists of replacing outdated existing copper services with fiber optic lines to provide Fiber to the Home (FTTH) service in remote areas. The copper service lines will be abandoned in place with new fiber optics being installed for redundancy. The easement will be amended to reflect the additional lines in the easement corridor.

The current easement encumbers ±5.251 acres of State Trust Land and the amendment will not burden this section with additional acreage.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

No formal public scoping was performed by DNRC for this proposed project. Project Telephone obtained a Settlement of Damages form from the grazing lessee.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

No other government permits are needed.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Proposed Alternative: Issue the 20' wide easement amendment to Project Telephone for the installation of fiber optic cable across Section 16, Township 6 South, Range 18 East in Carbon County.

No Action Alternative: Deny the 20' wide easement amendment to Project Telephone for the installation of fiber optic cable across Section 16, Township 6 South, Range 18 East in Carbon County.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The route proposed in the easement is generally follows the East Rosebud Road with a portion following the Luther Roscoe Road. The fiber optic cable is proposed to be installed using the direct plow method that entails opening the ground with a plow blade pulled behind a tracked cable plow. This method creates a narrow opening in the soil, inserts the cable, covers that cable and smooths the disturbed soil in a single pass. This installation method is considered trenchless. The proposed route is along public roadways where disturbance has previously occurred. Based on the proposed action and relatively short disturbance time for cable installation, no significant adverse impacts to geology and soils are expected by implementing the proposed action.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The proposed and existing easement crosses the East Rosebud Creek. The county has secured right-of-way for a bridge spanning over the creek and the proposed alternative will attach the cable to the bridge instead of boring underneath the streambed. No significant adverse impacts to water quality, quantity or distribution are anticipated by implementing the proposed action.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

There may be short-term isolated impacts from the equipment exhaust that is used to install the fiber optic cable. No significant adverse impacts to air quality are expected by implementing the proposed action.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The cable is proposed to be installed using direct plow method that entails opening the ground with a plow blade pulled behind a tracked cable plow. This method creates a narrow opening in the soil, inserts the cable, covers that cable and smooths the disturbed soil in a single pass. This installation method is considered trenchless. The area disturbed by the trenching activity and from vehicle travel could have short term impacts on vegetation. However, the disturbed area is adjacent to East Rosebud Road and Luther Roscoe Road, which are public roads. No significant long term adverse impacts to vegetative cover, quantity or quality are expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

A variety of big game (deer, elk, and mountain lions), small mammals, raptors, songbirds and turkeys may traverse the subject section. The proposed project activities could temporarily disrupt wildlife movement and patterns. The proposed alternative runs adjacent to public roads. Due to the relatively short project duration

and nature no significant adverse impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic life and habitats are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program database indicated the following species of concern have been observed with the general area:

- **Grizzly Bear** (*Ursus arctos*), **Spotted Bat** (*Euderma maculatum*), **Wolverine** (*Gulo gulo*)
- **Clark's Nutcracker** (*Nucifraga columbiana*), **Golden Eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*), **Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*)

Grizzly Bear have been identified within the database; however, this section is outside the nonrecovery occupied area. Grizzly may be wandering the area, but the area is not critical to the grizzly bear habitat.

Bat Roosts (Cave and Non-cave) have been discovered in the area. There are also potential species of concern that have the possibility of having habitats or being observed in the surrounding area.

Due to the nature of the proposed action, the installation of underground fiber optic cable, following public roadways that have seen disturbances associated with use, it is not expected to have a significant long-term effect on any of the species identified on or around this parcel. The surface disturbance will be temporary and located parallel and adjacent to an existing private road.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The following cultural and paleontological surveys have been previously performed:

- 1989 – 1989-5-3 – Oil/Gas Development
 - No Cultural or Paleontological Resources identified.

A Class I (literature review) level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the area of potential effect (APE). This entailed inspection of project maps, DNRC's sites/site leads database, land use records, General Land Office Survey Plats, and control cards. The Class I search revealed that no cultural or paleontological resources have been identified in the project APE. No additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted in response to this proposed development. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made.

The proposed action will use a direct plow method adjacent to public roads that have previously been disturbed. No cultural and paleontological resource inventories have been documented nor identified in the area of potential effect on state land. The proposed project will have *No Effect to Antiquities* as defined under the Montana State Antiquities Act. Formal reports of findings are available through the DNRC and the Montana State Historic Preservation Officer. No additional archaeological or paleontological investigative work is recommended.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed action would result in the installation of underground fiber optic cable adjacent and parallel to an existing public road. Once the easement areas are rehabbed from the installation disturbance, the only indication that there is an underground fiber optic line would be from any above-ground warning markers.

Therefore, no significant adverse impact to aesthetics is expected as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No significant adverse impacts to environmental resources of land, water, air or energy are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other known studies or future actions are planned for this Trust land parcel.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

No significant adverse impacts to human health and safety are expected to occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The location of the easement does not traverse any crop lands. No significant adverse impacts to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The proposed action will have no significant impact on the quantity and distribution of employment.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will have no adverse impact on tax revenue.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

The implementation of the proposed alternative will not generate any additional demands on governmental services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Implementation of the proposed alternative will not conflict with any locally adopted plans.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

The subject parcel does have legal public access via a county road – Roscoe Luther Road and East Rosebud Road. The fiber optic cable installation is expected to occur in the Spring/Summer of 2023 (weather dependent). Impacts due to installation should be minimal as the easements run parallel to existing roads or highways and installation will be of a relatively short duration. The implementation of the proposed alternative is not expected to have a long-term adverse impact on recreational use of these Trust land parcels.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

No significant adverse impacts to density and distribution of population and housing would occur as a result of implementing the proposed alternative.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposed alternative.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed alternative will not have a significant adverse impact on cultural uniqueness or diversity.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The Common Schools Trust Permanent Fund will benefit by getting a one-time fee of \$15,060.00 from Project Telephone for the amendment of the easement on this Trust parcel.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Joe Holzwarth	Date: 18 October 2022
	Title: Area Planner, Southern Land Office	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The proposed alternative has been selected and it is recommended that Deed #8121 be amended to allow Project Telephone to install a new fiberoptic line in their easement corridor for the purpose of installing a fiber optic cable on State Trust Land Parcel Section 16, Township 6 South, Range 18 East.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The potential for significant adverse impacts to the Trust lands listed above are minimal due to the nature of the proposed action which would entail the issuing of the easements and installation of underground fiber optic cable. The installation and disturbance are expected to be completed in a short time-frame. The easement is located adjacent to and parallel to existing public roadways. There are no natural features that could produce adverse impacts or species of concern occupying the parcels that are expected to be impacted by implementing the proposed action.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

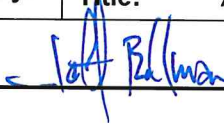
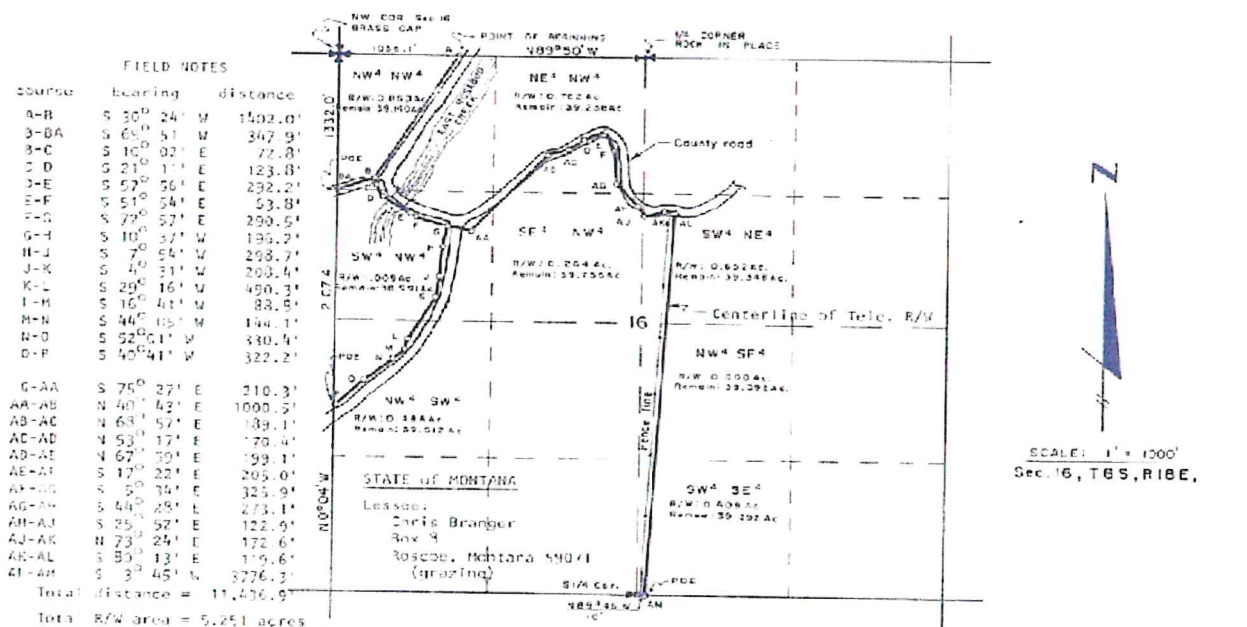
EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Jeff Bollman, AICP
	Title: Area Manager, Southern Land Office
Signature: 	Date: 20 October 2022

Exhibit A – Proposed Easement location on the Section 16-T06S-R18E



AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA)
COUNTY OF HILL)

I, J. J. HEBERLY, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR THE PROJECT TELEPHONE COMPANY, INC., WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT SCOBEE, MONTANA, THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION, AND THAT THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT.



SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME
THIS 14th DAY OF February, 1993
Notary Public for the State of Montana
RESIDING AT HAYRE, MONTANA
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES June 19, 1995

J. J. HEBERLY REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL
ENGINEER, MONTANA NO. 107561



PLAT of RIGHT-OF-WAY on STATE LAND
SEC 16, T6S, R18E, R.M.M.

PROJECT TELEPHONE COMPANY, INCORPORATED
SCOBEE, MONTANA

HEBERLY & ASSOCIATES

HAYRE, MONTANA

Q.